

Don't Give Up – Look Up !

Luke 18:1 [NIV] *“Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.”*

This parable that Jesus told the disciples was one of contrasts showing what God was **not** like.

Luke 18:2-8 [NIV] *“He said: ‘In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, ‘Grant me justice against my adversary.’ For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or care about men, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually wear me out with her coming!’ And the Lord said, ‘Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, **who cry out to him day and night?** Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?’ ”*

God is **not** like this judge who would not give in and give justice to the widow. Jesus is telling us to pray and not give up but look up.

This story is rather humorous, with contrasting characters. The prodigious, powerful judge and the powerless widow. This judge didn't care about people, he was a “hard boiled” callous man. The widow was asking for justice. We don't know what her problem was but widows in those days had no rights and being a woman made this twice as true. A widow was bottom of the social ladder and had no resources. The word for widow in Greek means “forsaken”.

But this woman was no “push over” the judge wouldn't give her what she needed so she used the only weapon she had, her persistence. We then are told of this battle of wills, the impotent widow intimidating the prodigious judge.

“Wear me out” in Greek means to bruise or to give a black eye. The judge was afraid if he didn't give in this widow would assault him in her aggression.

The judge gave in just to get some peace and quiet.

Jesus says to His disciples, *‘do you think this is the way God reacts to your prayers?’*

No! God's desire is to answer our prayers and give us justice quickly. But notice Jesus links this contrasting reaction of God from the unjust judge to the subject of faith.

You don't have to wear God down with persistent prayers; in His Great Love for us He wants to answer our prayer quickly.

The questions then are: ‘Why be persistent?’ ‘How come my prayers are not answered instantly?’ ‘Why should I keep on praying when the answer doesn't come in my timetable?’

Four reasons why we should continue to pray when the answer doesn't come.

1 Persistent praying helps me focus on God

Philippians 4:19 [NIV] *“And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.”*

This is to remind me where the source of answers to my prayers are to be found. God alone is the source of the answers to my prayers. When we have to pray for the same thing over and over then we are focusing our attention on God.

It seems to be a natural reaction for us to look to anyone else other than God for an answer to our problems.

We look to our friends, our family, counsellors, the Government, anyone except God.

God who is longing to solve our problems for us.

Psalms 105:4-7 [NIV] *“Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always. Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles, and the judgements he pronounced, descendants of Abraham his servant, O sons of Jacob, his chosen ones. He is the LORD our God; his judgements are in all the earth.”*

God often delays an answer to force us to focus on Him for the answers.

2 Persistent praying clarifies my request

A delayed answer helps us to clarify exactly what we want God to do to answer our prayers. Most of our prayers are too vague and general. For example, *“God bless me”* or *“God be merciful to me”*.

With such prayers, how are we going to know if God has answered our prayer?

“God bless my life”. Sometimes a blessing is a problem! Is that what we are praying for?

Be specific – don’t be general. Delayed answers from God give us time to make our prayers very specific, to refine our request.

Delay is a test to see how much we really do want what we are praying for. If we only pray once for something, it shows we don’t really desire it.

Zechariah 13:9 [Good News Bible] *“I will test them as gold is tested. Then they will pray and I will answer them.”*

Time separates deep longings from mere whims, an earnest desire of a passing fad.

I have prayed for some things and during the delayed answer time realised that it was something that I really did not want to happen after all – not what I needed.

Christians are like tea bags – you don’t really know what they are like until you drop them in hot water: then what comes out tells you what is inside.

God delays the answer to test us – not that He doesn’t want to give us the answer but He wants to know is this what we really want? Do we want it enough to keep on praying about it. Many times during the delay we will find we will modify our prayers.

Jeremiah 29:13 [NIV] *“You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.”*

Nothing worthwhile is accomplished with *“half-hearted”* prayers. God wants to know if we really, really want what we are praying for.

3 Persistent praying prepares me for the answer

God usually wants to do more than we are praying for. Surprise!! We pray for something but God wants to do it bigger or better.

Ephesians 3:20 [Living Bible] *“Now glory be to God, who by His mighty power at work within us, is able to do far more than we would ever have dare to ask or even dream of, infinitely beyond our highest prayers, desires, thoughts or hopes.”*

God wants to do it bigger and better. Sometimes we ask for a small blessing and God denies it. Why? He wants to give us a bigger blessing when we have been prepared to receive it.

I'm glad some of my prayers have not been answered in my time schedule, for if they had been answered I would not have been ready for them to be answered.

People say, *“prayer changes things”*, but *“prayer also changes people”* – us, and God is more interested in us than in things or circumstances.

God wants to make some changes in us before we can really profit from what we are praying for.

Often as soon as we have made the changes in our lives the answer comes.

Unanswered prayer is not so much that we are waiting on God but God is waiting on us.

When we are ready then the answer will come quickly.

Prayer is **not** a tug-of-war with God trying to convince Him. The real struggle is mostly with ourselves, we are not ready for the answer or the blessing.

4 Persistent praying strengthens my faith

Prayer goes with faith hand in hand. Faith is like a muscle – it grows by being stretched, and we are not *“stretched”* until we have to wait!

Praying persistently is a faith-building exercise.

A mark of maturity is how long can we wait for God's answer.

Galatians 6:9 [NIV] *“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.”*

Hang on; be patient; the harvest is coming **if** we don't give up. Be persistent.

Don't give up – look up! I recently heard the true story of Reece House who was a missionary in Africa. When he was in England, God impressed on him that he should go to Africa as a missionary, but he had no money to finance the trip. He kept waiting for the money to come to buy a ticket to London then to board a boat for Africa. God continued to prompt him to make this journey, reminding him that He was the source of all his needs.

So with only enough money saved to go 50 miles towards London, he announced to his church that he was going to Africa to be a missionary, and the church gave him a great farewell party.

He got on the train and travelled the 50 miles his money allowed him and got off, feeling very foolish, standing on the platform wondering what to do next. He then felt compelled by God to join the queue of some 18 people waiting to buy a ticket for London. The queue got shorter and shorter, and Reece

was feeling more and more embarrassed all the time. There was only two people in the queue ahead of him when the man in front turned round and said to Reece, *“I’ve changed my mind. You take my ticket money for London.”*

So Reece thanked him and God and continued on his journey to London, then worked his passage on a ship to Africa.

God’s timing was perfect but Reece had to be persistent and not give up.

God’s delays are not God’s denials; they are to focus us on God – to clarify our requests, to prepare us for a greater blessing and to strengthen our faith.

Luke 18:8 [NIV] *“I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”*

Yes! Jesus will find faith in us if we are persistent in our prayers and use God’s delay in responding to help us to:

- a) Focus on God as the source of our answer;
- b) Clarify our need and separate them from our passing desires;
- c) Allow God time to prepare us for a greater blessing;
- d) Strengthen our faith in God by waiting on God.

The size of our prayers determines the size of our God!

Do we have a big God or a little God? Look at our prayer life!

What are we praying for? Something tiny that we could accomplish with our power and resources! Or something so big that it is far beyond anything we could accomplish.

Our persistence in praying for that big request demonstrates our faith, if it is small or big.

Matthew 17:20 [NIV] *“He replied, Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there’ and it will move. **Nothing will be impossible for you.**”*

We only need a little faith in a big God for mountainous things to happen in our lives.

When there is a delay in God’s response, two things are happening:

- (a) God is testing our faith
- (b) Satan is contesting our faith

How quickly do we give up on God when the answer is not immediate?

How do we pray persistently?

Luke 11:1-13 [NIV] *“One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.’ He said to them, ‘When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation.’ Then he said to them, ‘Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him. Then the one inside answers, ‘Don’t bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can’t get up and give you anything. I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man’s boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs. So I say to you: **Ask** and it will be given to you; **seek** and you will find; **knock** and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. “Which of you*

fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

Jesus is covering the same subject of persistent prayer in this parable.

Jesus is also telling His disciples how to pray persistently.

Keep on:- **Asking! Seeking! Knocking!**

How many people would we talk to if we only allowed the telephone to ring once before we gave up?

Keep on, not to “wear God down” but for our benefit, to make us:

- a) Focus on God
- b) Clarify our requests
- c) Be prepared for a bigger blessing
- d) Strengthen our faith

Don't give up – look up!

Don't despair – turn to prayer!

The crown ahead of us is always worth another try.

You cannot be considered a failure if what we are doing is a matter of faith in God.

Don't give up – look up.